SURVIVANCE:

A Zine About Surviving and Resisting Sexual Violence

CONTENTS

Resisting Self Blame, Guilt and Shame through exposing myths, lies and other perpetrator tactics

Dealing with strong emotions— anger, grief and loss

Building Trust and Connections

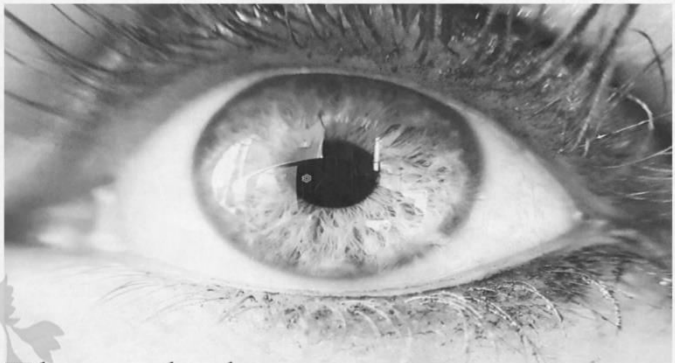
Reclaiming our bodies and sexual pleasure/intimacy

INTRODUCTION

This zine is intended for survivors, friends, and family of survivors.

This zine may contain triggering words and images. Please make sure you are in a safe space when reading.

This zine was created in May 2017 by a strong group of women who gathered together in order to understand and heal.



Through the eyes of Pressed Flowers

What survivors of sexual assult really wish they could say to the ones that want to help

"Silence is deafening"

"I want you to see my scars, but I don't want you to see me cry"

"Listen, and HEAR me"

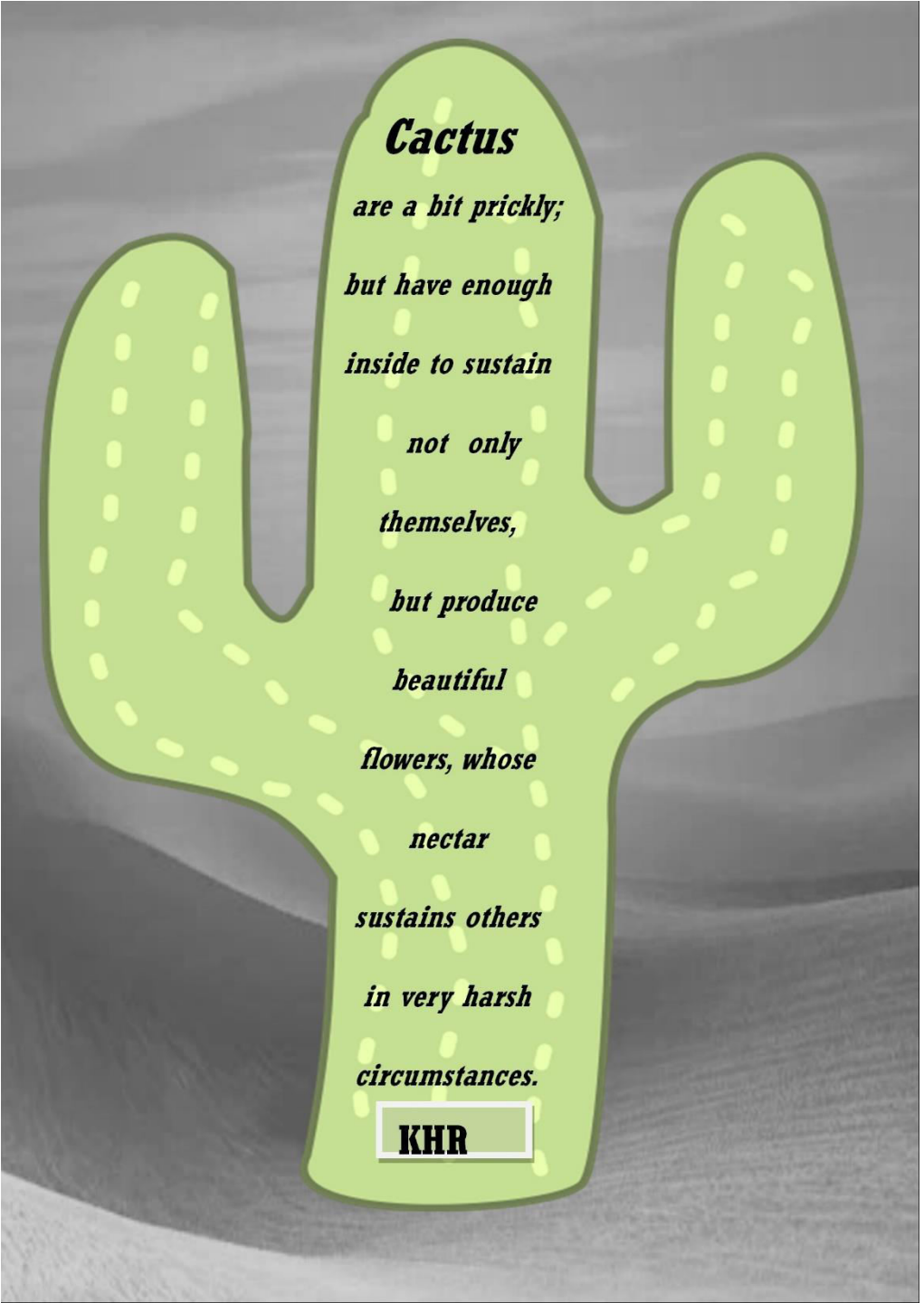
"I'm scared I'm contagious"

"PLEASE TELL ME YOU BELIEVE ME"

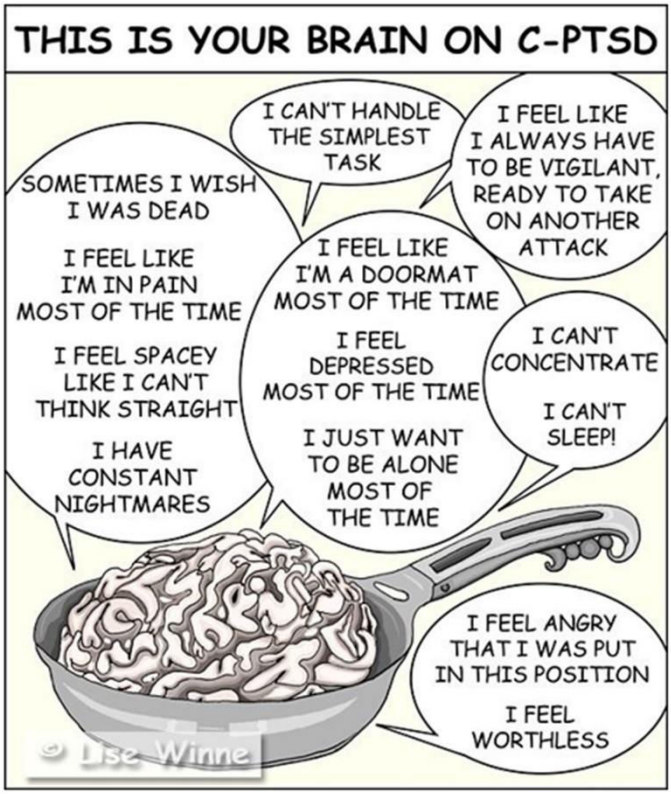
"I might tell you to go away, but I really want you here"

"It's my story – and I will choose what details I'm willing to share"

"Sometimes I just don't know how to ask for help"


Cactus
are a bit prickly;
but have enough
inside to sustain
not only
themselves,
but produce
beautiful
flowers, whose
nectar
sustains others
in very harsh
circumstances.
KHR

PTSD has many different symptoms, some people have a few, others have lots. It can make you feel **CRAZY** and alone. You might be walking along doing your grocery shopping and suddenly have an intense flashback which makes you so anxious you start sweating and freaking out……you are sure everyone can see that you are totally crazy……..but you aren't!!! Your brain just needs a break, so treat yourself like a small child and be kind to


THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON C-PTSD
I CAN'T HANDLE THE SIMPLEST TASK
I FEEL LIKE I ALWAYS HAVE TO BE VIGILANT, READY TO TAKE ON ANOTHER ATTACK
SOMETIMES I WISH I WAS DEAD
I FEEL LIKE I'M IN PAIN MOST OF THE TIME
I FEEL SPACEY LIKE I CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT
I HAVE CONSTANT NIGHTMARES
I FEEL LIKE I'M A DOORMAT MOST OF THE TIME
I FEEL DEPRESSED MOST OF THE TIME
I JUST WANT TO BE ALONE MOST OF THE TIME
I CAN'T CONCENTRATE
I CAN'T SLEEP!
I FEEL ANGRY THAT I WAS PUT IN THIS POSITION
I FEEL WORTHLESS
© Lise Winne

SHAME you feel it, you've been dishonoured, violated, how could you let this happen?? You didn't!! It's the perpetrator/s that should feel disgrace, guilty, mortified & ashamed. It was their actions not yours.

FLAME you are angry and rightfully so. No one should be treated this way. But not at yourself, not at society, but at the perpetrator/s and their supporters solely. It was their actions not yours.

BLAME you feel it's your fault, how could I let this happen, If only I'd . . . Again it's the perpetrator/s that's responsible. It was their actions not yours.

NAME your perpetrator, there are people & places that can help you make the person accountable for their actions. The system may not be perfect, and it hurts to discover there are people you must remove from your life, but it helps and it's important, essential to surround yourself with the ones that can help you heal.

RECLAIM yourself, let go of the SHAME it's not yours to bear; let go of the Blame it's not yours to endure. Hold on to the FLAME and let it light the way; not be so strong that it blinds you to the exceptional person you know you are.

KHR 17

Silence is Golden . . .

Duct Tape is Silver . . .

The honest Truth . . .

PAINFUL ! !

Do not be gagged!!

Rape & Sexual Assault are Despicable Acts.!!

Sex is a life changing, life giving experience. It opens your soul, it allows you to discover yourself, gives you trust & faith in another person outside of yourself. Helps you grow, outwardly, inwardly. Like a tree whose branches reach for the heavens & roots stretch out wide & deep beneath the earth. Strong, Stable, Majestic, Magnificent. Isn't that what we all want for each other & ourselves?? It is what we all deserve!! It is what we all should revere!!

KHR 17

Dear Dr

I'm writing this down as I think it will be easier for me to explain my issues than trying to tell you about them. For quite some time now I have been struggling with life in general. I am not sleeping well, I have many dark nightmares, get headaches, have feelings of worthlessness, am constantly teary and I need help to get out the this dark hole I have found myself in. I have a wonderful partner & two beautiful boys that deserve so much more than they are getting from me. I have isolated myself from my family and friends (who wants to be around someone who is sad all the time, and If I'm not sad I'm angry) Angry because they don't care enough to ask what's wrong. But even if they did, I can't tell them what's wrong because if I do I don't know what the consequences will be. I've baulked at telling a GP as this now gets on my record, it's not anonymous like Bravehearts, or BRISSC. I'm scared of people pitying me or blaming me or worse sending me away or taking my children from me. Who can comprehend the abuse of an innocent child by the ones who should be their protectors, their main role model. How can anyone see a child as a sexual being, and how do you fix/help someone who feels so broken. The foundation of my soul is damaged & I need help to fix it. I need to be the happy life loving person I want to be, the great role model for my children whose foundation I want to be strong and stable. I want to be strong & stable.

The past:-

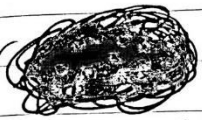
- Sexual abuse from my father from 0 – 16
- Mother dies when I'm 17 – brothers are 15 & 13
- Mother caught father abusing but did nothing (told him to stop – he threatened to leave)

What has made the past an issue now:-

- Hey Dad court case, Rolf Harris, Michael Jackson media coverage
- Movies & TV shows with plots around child abuse (Sunshine & Oranges)
- Estranged from father as he showed no respect for my partner
- Did not attend 70th birthday party for father in Jan 2012 organised by brother which has now estranged his family from mine.
- Falling out with partner's family (Nov 2013) – (Mum, Step Father & 3 sisters) no support there!!
- My children heading towards adolescence (10 & 12)

Things that need fixing:-

- Sleep/Nightmares (I stay up late to try and avoid dark thoughts)
- Sadness/ Teary (I cry at TV adds, songs on the radio EVERY DAY)
- Self-Worth / Confidence (feelings of the people I love would be better off without me)

Dear 

I remember that night as clear as glass. I remember what I was wearing + I haven't worn that skirt since. I remember pitying you on your divorce. I remember trying to push you off + saying no. stop. but you didn't. I remember my future being ruined, my friends stopped talking to me, my sleeping pattern got fucked up. I remember wanting to peel my skin off. I remember you cumming on my face. I remember EVERYTHING, yet all I want is too forget. I hate going outside, I hate going to all the places I used to go too, in case you're there. I hate how you still affect my life even after all these years. I have trouble sleeping at night. I have trouble with sex. I gained 40 kg after you raped me because I thought people wouldn't notice me. I'd be less of a target. I hate you. you destroyed my sense of safety in my own home.

HATE YOU. I HATE YOU. I HATE YOU. I HATE YOU.

Dread coils in my belly, tendrils drifting throughout my entire body until I'm thoroughly frozen. So brimming with fear I want to run screaming. This simple task is never simply simple for me. It's fraught with demons that I have to overcome. *Every. Single. Time.* I wish I could erase your stamp from my mind and body. Not be triggered by a regular doctor's appointment. And you'd think that 19 years would be long enough to 'get over it'. But no. Nope. Nah uh. Nah mate.

Yeah

I gather my courage in steps and stages. Acknowledge my feelings of fear and fright. And I say it's ok to be scarred - oops! - scared. Everyone needs to see the doctor sometimes. But every time I do I relive the waking nightmare that was my appointment with you. *You asked me for permission to examine me.* As I was locked in those stirrups you invaded my body. You deliberately hurt me and got off on it. On me. It has taken ages for me to comprehend that whilst I consented to a medical examination ***I did not consent to your violation of me***.

What you did changed the course of my life. Time and again I break apart. I pick up the pieces. I've followed this pattern for so many years now I wonder - what will it take for me to truly feel safe?

Reporting you for the crime you committed 19 years ago.

It's not your FAULT

you have a right to FEEL

to search and FIND

your inner FRIEND

to gain your FREEDOM

You've been through HELL

and it really HURTS

Maybe this can HELP

to give you HOPE

& enable you to HEAL

KHR 17

Legs tensing, pulling.

Like an instinctive grip

To where I am

As I Freeze

Yet flooding—

Inundated with a suite

Of nipping, gnawing, burning

A response too body's

Memories of hurt, pain, betrayal

Systematically shutting down

Limb by limb

Until so still

I hardly breathe

Yet internally—my mind

Is screaming

Silence at my lips

Molten through my hips

As stomach churns

And I know I will be sick '

I curse

The one who trapped

A piece of my soul

Layered in my mind.

My eyes see slightly

Although blurred as my senses prickle

COLD.

How can it be that with a fire burning deep

Outside I freeze .

Cold.

How can it be that when my daughter speaks to me I hear

But cannot speak.

Cold.

My eyes dart

Panicked

And she doesn't understand that it is not she who brought me here

It fact it was she who kept me here.

A flash.

It was she who kept me here

I pause ;

Those tears are not from here question

But a sign I'm thawing out.

Slowly. Slowly.

The clash of hear and cold

And now I see

A little clearer

Despite the tears

That drop and drip and run.

"Mummy, are you ok?"

She asks with eyes wide as she reaches out to me

We touch and up into my arms she comes

I smile as a tear meets my lips

And whisper

"It's OK to cry my dear."

She nuzzles in to the gap between my shoulder and my neck

I focus on the feeling of her

Breathing beneath my hand

Across her back

I match her breath and hum

A song we share

I made it.

I made it back to her.

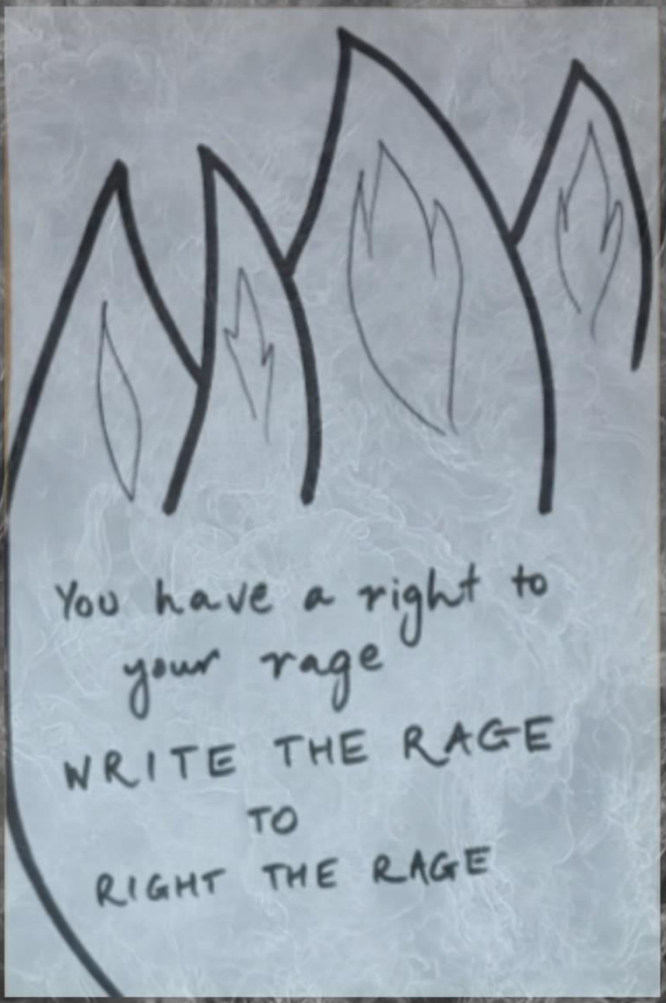
In mind and spirit.

She keeps me here once more

A siren singing me to life when all

Else would very nearly down me .

JEMS 2017


You have a right to
your rage
WRITE THE RAGE
TO
RIGHT THE RAGE

Buggerlugs and her twin sister lost their Mum due to a car accident. She was very tiny when she came into my care. She survived through 2 hourly bottle feeds around the clock. She was very frightened when she first came into my care.

She now is very loving and even tries to clean my sores. Buggerlugs just loves a cuddle and to chill. In my little girl's drey (home) she now has her twin sister along with an older sister and a new guy in her life.

Buggerlug's favourite food would have to be grapes and apple. She spends her evenings learning to climb all the fresh leaf that has been collected for her and the other fur babies. But overall Buggerlugs just loves to spend time with Mum (me) having cuddles and holding Mum's finger.

My message to others is that no matter where you have come from or what has happened you can be loved...and there is an important person for someone out there no matter if they have fur or not! Now because of a kind human taking these 4 Ringtail Possums, they have a future...a family that will be together for the rest of their lives.

"I am mine"
Lyrics by Eddie Vedder

"I know I was born &
I know that I'll die
the inbetween is mine
I AM MINE"

"The SORROW grows BIGGER
when the sorrows denied
I only know my mind
I AM MINE"

One of my favourite songs from my favourite band Pearl Jam.

Music has a way of transporting us, soothing us, touching our psyche and helping us release powerful emotions. To me this song is about the inevitability of birth and death - and the chance that we all have to shape our own lives with the power of our minds and our own free will. As survivors of sexual violence, we can reclaim our lives, we can redefine ourselves through our own eyes, we can reclaim our own true sense of self, and not allow anyone to suppress our true self-worth and the amazing strong women that we are.

The in between is ours - and we can shape that in between in any which way we choose!

my body and I are still getting to know each other

Trauma made us strangers

unable to talk to each other. unable to meet eyes in the mirror

but slowly, day by day, we're getting better

healing

one day we'll sit and have coffee... and start over

Motion is Lotion!! Love & nurture the body you have. Challenge it (Not Punish). Sweat opens your body, releasing toxins cleansing your system. Movement makes you focus on the present. Breathe, Smile, be Grateful, be Proud, be YOU!! KHR 17

WOW!
Someone can HELP!!
I looked online & found BRISSC. Did I mention they can help?
BATGIRL
They can support you 1on1 or in an awesome group
BRISSC
Ph: 3391 2573
I'd highly recommend the group!
The groups are amazing & I don't feel so alone now

A poem... about healing, and feelings and stuff....

Mother takes me for a shopping spree
Proof that soon a lady I will be
But then you come and take something from me.
I cried.
I always cry.

Morning breaks, the birds announce the dawn
Into my room you creep, I am now warned
Laying silently, the tears burn deep.
I freeze
I learn to freeze

Confusion sets in now, as my best friend
Shame, disgust, all my accompaniments
Never will I be whole within again
I cry
I don't want to cry. .

Innocence has gone, I've grown too fast
Childhood is over in a flash
Taking responsibility too young
I cried
I always cry

Days and weeks and years, they come and go
Loneliness feel like it's all I'll ever know
Mother calls me frigid. She won't know.
I cried.
It burns to cry.

Strength one day, I want for this to end
You arrive and I say I will not bend
Let you know, you cannot touch me again
He cries.
And so do I.

Then a mother one day I'm to be.
Swear that near to her, you'll never be.
Lioness inside comes forth from me
I fight.
I'll always fight.

Anchored now to her, I'll always be
Picking up the pieces they don't see
Strength, resilience and striving to be
I thrive
I've learned to thrive

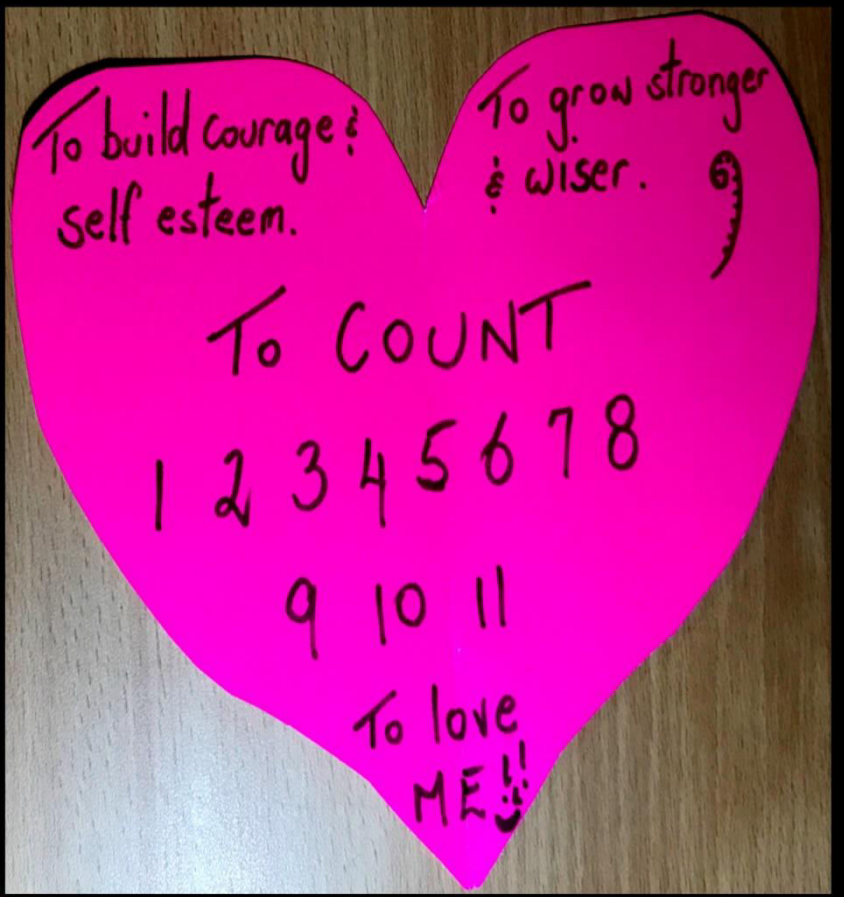
Working everyday to find some way
To heal these wounds that no one else can see
Surviving, thriving, growing everyday
I smiled
Now I can smile.

Someone told me I should forgive today
Regret would come if you should pass away
But I can't look upon your face in any case
I cried
Why did I cry

Healing is a journey that twists and bends
I pick myself up and stand again
In myself I know that this cycle can end
I speak
I stand up and speak.
JEMS

I DON'T
WANT TO BE
FRIGHTENED
ANYMORE

I HOPE BY
SHARING,
YOU WILL NOT FEEL
SO ALONE,
I WILL NOT FEEL
SO ALONE.
I HOPE WE AS A
GROUP
CAN MOVE TOWARD
CHANGING OUR WAY
OF LIVING TODAY
AND TOMORROW


To build courage & self esteem.
To grow stronger & wiser.
To COUNT
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9 10 11
To love ME!!

"Telling Our Stories In Ways That Make Us Stronger"

There are very few spaces where survivors feel safe enough to tell their stories. Over the course of 7 weeks, we engaged in an 'outsider-witness' process, as a way of telling and honouring our sacred stories. These stories covered themes such as self-blame, shame, anger, sexuality and body image.

As survivors, we have had to survive not only the act of sexual violence, but also many other forms of oppression and injustices. This includes but is not limited to homelessness, victim-blaming, poverty, exploitation, and poor treatment within the medical and legal systems. To deal with the pain with these injustices some of us have used/abused alcohol, repressed our memories or bottled our feelings.

Reaching out for help when we are struggling can be so hard. As A puts it, we hold "the guilt of making people feel uncomfortable". These barriers are compounded by a rape culture and society thinks we are just "damaged goods", liars or attention seekers.

But in the shadows of sexual violence, we have discovered that we are not defeated nor 'damaged goods'. We are a collective of women, with many skills, talents, and wisdoms. As T. asserts, "We count, we matter". We hope that our hard-won knowledge that has been gained through adversity can make a significant contribution to the lives of others experiencing similar hardships. By telling our stories, we hope that our suffering has not been for nothing.

Openness to love

"I am a strong woman. I survived something horrible and yet I still have the capacity to let people into my life willingly, and I refuse to let them win ever again. I want to be, and will be, open to love and to trusting people." (E)

Reclaiming my body

"I have developed 7 skills that have helped me to reclaim by body: perception, judgement, honesty, ambition, courage, resilience and invisibility." (J)

WAYS WE ARE RECLAIMING OUR LIVES FROM THE EFFECTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Giving permission to feel

"I'm given myself permission to feel" (X)

"Reading romance, reading of love opened me up, even though I was a book snob." (S)

Reclaiming my body

"I had a meltdown during my son's birth and experienced so much rage. I needed to be celibate for a while… I am now ok with touch, nature heals, being in the forest alone, chanting, sacred dance classes helped." (S)

Dancing

"Western medicine helps but dancing shows it can change brain matter, dancing with only women present, being enveloped by women is healing." (S)

Learning to trust and using non-verbal communication

"In December 2015, I met my current partner. Our first date we sat under the stars for 6 hours just talking. It took three dates and I told him my history, he was so angry - not at me, at the fact men had done this to me, over and over again. For the first time ever, I felt safe. He's stayed through all these irrational things I've done, and that's all I wanted. Someone who wouldn't leave. Someone who wouldn't hurt me. I still don't have my trust with him 100%, I have trouble telling him when I feel depressed or suicidal, because I don't want to upset him or worry him, but I'm working on it in nonverbal ways - I text him a certain picture." (E)

HOW STORIES OF SURVIVANCE (SURVIVAL AND RESISTANCE) MAKES US STRONGER

In listening to these stories, many of us were deeply moved. These stories not only resonated with us, they have inspired to in so many ways to live our lives fully.

Appreciating the struggle

"It warms my heart to hear how resilient J is in dealing with adversity and how she upheld her ethics." (B)

"It makes me realise that we can go through hell and still be this beautiful woman.
Invisibility and armour." (E)

"In listening to her story, I saw a boxer, as a fighter takes hits – you're up there, I'm not going to take this anymore." (E)

"While listening to E, it amazes me that she still trusts herself, it amazes me that she sees the good in people. I think she is strong." (JA)

"JA being a mother to her brothers is a testament to her strength as a woman, I can see the heartbreak, selflessly loving and struggling" (S)

Supported our own healing journeys

" I am at the beginning of my own healing journey. There is [in hearing S's story] a huge sense of relief that mirrors some of my experience since I started remembering. I think I need to be open to different forms of healing, value different modalities of healing" (A)

"Listening to J's story encourages me to do more self-reflection and find my own inner strength". (E)

"In listening to X, I have been given permission to feel" (J)

"I was captivated by the message that it's very important to help others…I went to court to help others and through this I realised it helped me when my husband said 'you seem to like yourself now'". (JA)

Withholding judgement

"I realised that I have developed ideas about people I don't even know. Listening to the stories of other survivors has helped me to learn to check myself. Everyone has something to share and this adds value to my life." (JA)

Practical strategies

"I don't ask for help because I don't have the words, so E's strategy for communicating by text message – her non-verbal communication is such a smart way to ask for help." (S)

Resisting power

"I can relate to the colour of power, it says you are not going to break me, seeing the little girl in red, resisting her grandfather's power…She fought through the courts and exposed him, this made me feel like I could report mine. It's daunting, intimidating but still important." (S)

Breaking from isolation

"Being here in this group makes me aware I'm not alone, and that is a powerful experience" (A)

"I think I'll try picking up a romance novel, I can relate, the feeling of not being alone." (B)

Notes:

"Telling our stories in ways that makes us stronger" (2001) is the title of a book from Barb Wingard and Jane Lester.

This is a collective narrative process using 'outside witness practices'. The words are from survivors of the group. The document was compiled and edited by BRISSC workers.

We are all at different stages of reading.

Romance Novels

Openess

Community

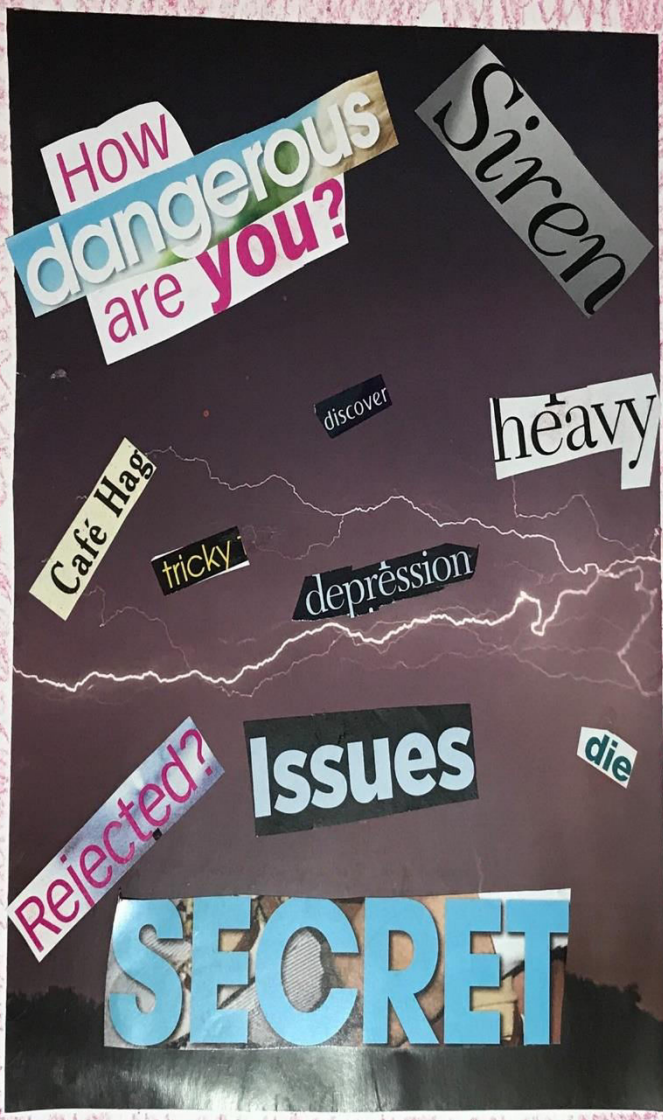
Zen + Calm.

HA!!

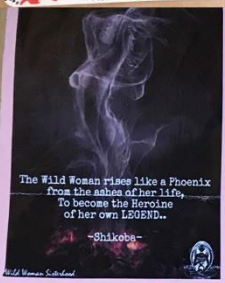
I DO COUNT...

1
2
3
4
5

ORIGINS

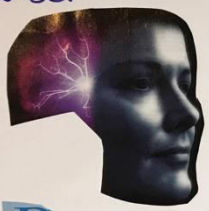

How dangerous are you?
Siren
discover
heavy
Café Hag
tricky
depression
Rejected?
Issues
die
SECRET

"I WAS LOSING THE ABILITY TO COPE WITH THE MOST BASIC TASKS. OPENING MAIL. RETURNING PHONE CALLS. EATING."
ACCEPTABLE PUBLIC MELTDOWNS
"THE MEAN REDS ARE HORRIBLE. SUDDENLY YOU'RE AFRAID AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE AFRAID OF."



I've died a thousand deaths,
each time reinventing
myself brighter, stronger,
and purer than before. From
the midst of ~~darkness~~ destruction,
I became the creator of
myself. From the midst of
darkness, I became my own
light. ;

I am getting smarter & wiser



FOR THOSE OBSESSED WITH THE PERFECT

a four-letter word.

The Journey of Discovering Yourself!!

Be Beautiful. Have Fun.

It was another bad night

IT'S A CRIME.

"NATURALLY, I WASN'T GOING TO TRUST

MUMMY DEAREST

RAPE = ONE PART POWER ONE PART BARBARIC

BUT SURVIVOR SAYS IT'S # ...and they're not off.

The Strangest thing is

THE DIFFERENCE IS IN THE DETAILS

She's just not that into it

We Hear You!

...ULOUS BEING A WOMAN." BE A PERSON TOO

Bedtime
Story
Not For
Children

DREAM
W·I·L·D
woman
THE TIME FOR CHANGE IS NOW!
THE WAY OF TRUTH
SACRED FIRE
what's really going on
FEAR AND OUR FUTURE
BISTRO DE PARIS
BIRD CAGE
Truer words were never spoken

alone
Out of the Blue
A Bolt
mood swing
TOTAL CONTROL
Do more than humanly possible.*
*Being a cartoon character not required.
HAPPIER YOU
SET AN example
SOMEPLACE ELSE
Protect You
somebody understands
FREE
HOW TO
to belong
KNOW YOU
NEGATIVE
CARE
FUL
Keeping kids safe
DON'T ROCK THE BOAT...
A REASON TO SMILE
Road to
RECOVERY
Help
POSITIVE
STAYING CONNECTED
The secret
I can get guidance
I AM
legal
STRUGGLING
ATTENTION
The community gratitude journal. When you feel so grateful, you want the world to kn
Write it in it. Read it. Pass it on.

TO JUST EXIST...
I don't belong in A Box!
You can't follow your gut if you're ruled by it
Were all different... thats ok..... But as one we can comfort each other if we want or need it!
family
NO SIGN OF THE ENEMIES. YET.
IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS
DON'T MESS WITH ME.
OK
TO THRIVE IN ANY LIFE YOU WANNA MAKE.

"I WAS LOSING THE ABILITY TO COPE WITH THE MOST BASIC TASKS OPENING MAIL RETURNING PHONE CALLS EATING
ACCEPTABLE PUBLIC MELTDOWNS
"THE MEAN REDS ARE HORRIBLE. SUDDENLY YOURE AFRAID AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOURE AFRAID OF."

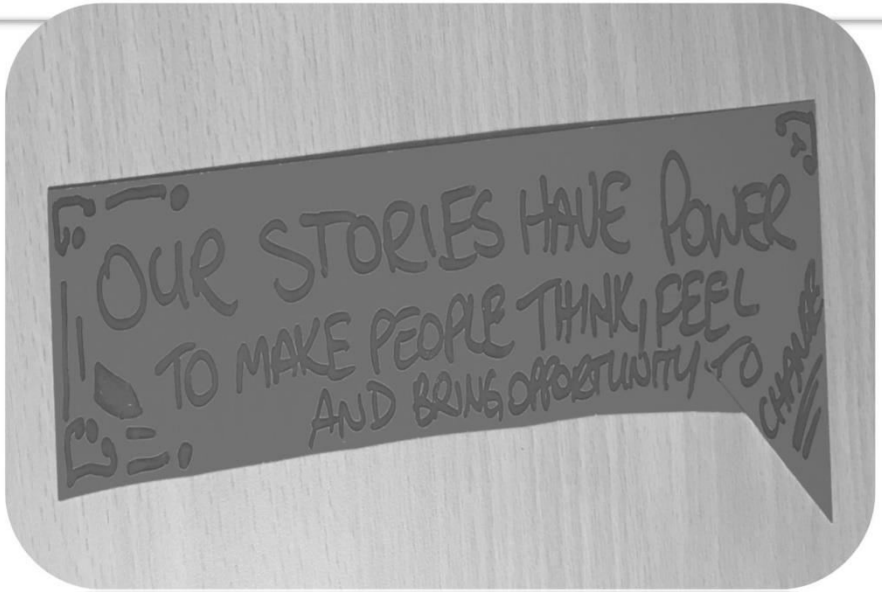
DEPRESSION
LASTING IMPRESSION
LOST SOUL
innocence lost
UnderPressure
Drama family
Depression
The truth
Cats
Therapy

Let our voices
and collective
EXPERIENCES
SHINE forth...
This Light will reach
dark and vast places,
stir hearts and minds
and has potential to
LEAD CHANGE!
~ BLAZE AHEAD ~

OUR STORIES HAVE POWER
TO MAKE PEOPLE THINK, FEEL
AND BRING OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE

I HOPE
SHARING

TO JUST EXIST...
I don't belong in a Box.
You can't follow your gut if you're ruled by it
Were all different... that's ok..... But as one we can comfort each other if we want or need it.
GOING THEIR OWN WAY
IT'S OFTEN DANGEROUS, DIFFICULT AND DIRTY WORK BUT THESE WOMEN LOVE IT
NO SIGN OF THE ENEMIES. YET.
family
IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS
DONT MESS WITH ME. OK
TO THRIVE IN ANY LIFE yo WANNA MAK


OUR STORIES HAVE POWER
TO MAKE PEOPLE THINK, FEEL
AND BRING OPPORTUNITY TO

My thoughts…

My feelings...

Feel moved or inspired to respond to our zine? Email us at: zinesbrissc@gmail.com

Services that can help;

Brisbane Rape & Incest Survivors Support Centre (BRISSC) (07) 3391 0004 9am-1pm, Mon to Thurs, Woolloongabba & Inala Region

1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) 24/7 national sexual assault, domestic family violence counselling service (phone counselling)

DV Connect – Women's Crisis Line 1800 811 811 24/7 phone support, accommodation and counselling referral

Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital Sexual Assault Response Team (07) 3646 5207 24/7 Service, recent Sexual Assault within 2 years of the episode

Queensland Statewide Sexual Assault Helpline 1800 010 120 7:30am-11:30pm phone support

Immigrant Women's Support Service (07) 3846 5400 Mon to Fri 9am to 4pm

Zig Zag – Young Women's Resource Centre (07) 3843 1823 Sexual Assault Counselling to young women 12-25 years and housing support to women 16-25 years

Murrigunyah Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Corp for Women (07) 3290 4254 9am – 5pm, Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri